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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, December 16, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Kitchen-made Christmas Gifts." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today my topic is a very timely one--if I do say so myself. I'm bringing you some suggestions for Christmas gifts--gifts you can make at home right in your own kitchen. For there--in such ordinary places as the flour bin-- the sugar canister--and the spice shelf--you have the makings of Christmas presents that are anything but ordinary.

In fact, a lot of times a home-made cake--or a glass of jelly--or a jar of mincemeat makes a present that's more suitable than something you might pay more for readymade. And the very fact that you take the care and spend the time to make the gift yourself shows the sincerity of your holiday good wishes.

Maybe you are one of those cooks who has a reputation for making one thing especially well--chocolate cake, say, or apple mint jelly--or candied grapefruit peel. Then I suggest that you capitalize on your reputation and send your specialty as a gift.

But if you have no such specialty, here are some other suggestions for Christmas gifts from the kitchen. I'm passing these on to you from a press release that came to me the other day from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Here's gift idea number one--fresh, home-roasted, salted nuts. These may be a present in themselves--or included in boxes of cookies or candy as a flavor contrast.

Some nuts are best made crisp by frying them in deep fat. These are nuts like almonds--and peanuts--and filberts. Other nuts can't stand the high temperatures of deep fat frying. These must be heated slowly in butter or oil, then salted. Pecans, Persian or English walnuts, and hickory nuts are in this class.

Still another way to make nuts crisp is to roast them in a slow oven. This method is suitable for peanuts and sweet almonds.

And now I'll read you the exact directions for frying almonds, peanuts, and filberts in deep fat.

"Heat about 1 quart fresh cooking oil in a deep kettle. (Peanut oil is especially good for this purpose, because it can be used over and over again.) This quart of oil will be enough to fry one-half pound of nuts--weighed after shelling. Heat the oil to about 300 degrees Fahrenheit or until a cube of bread browns in 5 or 6 minutes.

Fry the nuts by lowering them into the hot fat in a wire basket that is deep enough to prevent them floating over the top! Try out a few nuts at first to find the time that is required to get them just right. Keep the nuts in the hot oil only until they are a light brown. They will continue to cook for a few minutes after you remove them from the fat.

"Spread the nuts on absorbent paper, pat them gently with paper to remove excess fat. Then sprinkle with salt."

The directions I have just read were for frying nuts in deep fat. To salt pecans, Persian walnuts, or hickory nuts first heat them in a frying pan in enough oil or butter to cover--over low heat. Drain on absorbent paper, and sprinkle with salt.

So much for roast nuts. Another gift from the kitchen--one of the most colorful and acceptable of all--is jelly or marmalade. Being in a sealed jar it can be kept for some special occasion. Fruits in season now that make good raw material for jelly or marmalade are cranberries, apples, and citrus fruits.

Cranberries rate ace-high among the jelly fruits. And cranberry sauce and raw cranberry relish also make nice gifts. For marmalades, oranges and grapefruit are especially suitable. And this year crops of both these fruits give promise of being the largest on record.

Here are two tips that may help you when you put up jelly or marmalade for gifts. First, small meal-sized portions make the most satisfactory gifts. For then there may be a fresh mold of jelly for each meal. Then, too, a jelly such as cranberry that is high in acid often gets watery if it is left standing from meal to meal.

And second, your gift of jelly or marmalade will be twice as practical if you put it up in a small attractive glass. Then when the jelly is gone, the glass may be used for something else.

"Other timely kitchen gifts are sweets of all kinds--cookies, fruit cakes, plum puddings, and candies. If these are sent through the mails, the big problem is to wrap them so that they arrive at their destination in good shape. Cookies that are wafer thin and crumbly should never be sent far, for it is impossible to keep them whole. For other sweets, waxed paper and airtight tin containers are necessary to give enough protection against crushing and drying out."

And just one final suggestion--candies, quickbreads, and cakes that are made with honey as an ingredient will not present any problem in drying out. For honey has a special power--the ability to absorb and retain moisture.

These are all the gift suggestions I have time for today. But with seven more cooking days 'til Christmas I hope you will be able to make use of some of them.

